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SURVEY OF COMMUNITY FOOD PRESERVATION CENTERS, 1943

Immediately after this country's entrance into the war it was obvious that the available canned food supply could not be expected to fulfill adequately the requirements of the Armed Forces, lend-lease, and the civilian population. With the advent of food rationing, the average consumer became well aware of the part he would be required to play in our over-all food program. Interest in methods of preserving food for home use steadily increased. Since the preservation of foods by canning is by far the most common method, it was only natural that interest in this method would be stimulated and that there would be an increase in the number of persons desiring to can their own foods. The shortage of home canning equipment led to the increased utilization of existing facilities for canning food in so-called community canning centers and the development of new centers in areas where they were not already available.

A community food preservation center or community cannery is a center equipped with canning facilities which members of the community may use for preserving food under trained supervision. Eighteen years ago in the State of Georgia, community canneries got their start and within the past few years they have sprung up all over the country.

By providing food preservation facilities for persons who did not have them at home, much food of high nutritive value has been preserved for use throughout the year, thus improving the health of rural and urban families. Such progress would not have been possible if it were not for the fact that communities made up of farsighted and energetic citizens recognized the need of providing such facilities and responded to that need most enthusiastically. Many of these centers were started with the assistance of such Federal Agencies as the U. S. Office of Education, the Agricultural Extension Service, the Farm Security Administration, and the Office of Distribution.

The Government, in recognizing that food played a very important and vital part in the Nation's welfare, encouraged through these agencies the preservation of food by canning or other methods by persons who had grown their own produce as well as those who could purchase fresh foods on the open market or directly from farmers. The War Food Administration has taken a leading and effective part in increasing the over-all food supply by the encouragement of Victory Gardens and the preservation of every possible ounce of food. In cooperation with all agencies interested in the community food preservation program it has taken the lead in the development of technical information on the canning of produce in community canning centers in order to insure uniform and safe methods of processing.

WFA has also encouraged community food preservation centers from the standpoint of preserving not only the foods raised in Victory Gardens, but also the foods which are in abundance in the area. Where it is necessary for the Government to purchase such foods in order to support the prices guaranteed to farmers, WFA has made arrangements whereby the foods may be hauled to nearby community canneries and preserved for future use in school lunch programs or public institutions. In order to determine the number of community food preservation centers, their location, the quantity of food they were preserving, the number of families using such centers, the extent to which it is possible for these centers to accept for canning commodities purchased by the War Food Administration, and the extent to which the services and assistance of interested agencies should be developed, a joint survey was devised and carried out by the Office of Education, the Agricultural Extension Service, Farm Security Administration, and the Office of Distribution of the War Food Administration.

Out of an estimated total of 6,000 community canneries, survey forms were received from 2,950 centers located in 45 States and the District of Columbia. Inasmuch as this survey covers the year 1943 when some foods suitable for canning were particularly short, and as there is now considerably more interest shown by the housewife in this type of community project, it is expected that the number of families participating in these projects and the quantity of food canned in 1944 will greatly exceed the quantity canned and reported in this survey.

In the centers reporting, an estimated 416,000 families participated, or an average of 141 for each center. The 30,000,000 quarts of food canned by these families amounted to 70 quarts of food per family reporting. Of this total quantity canned, more than 21,000,000 quarts were vegetables while the remainder was about equally divided between fruits and meats. Details by regions are shown in table 1.

One of the most interesting results shown in the survey is the fact that approximately 15 percent of the fruits, 12 percent of the vegetables, and 10 percent of the meat canned was distributed to schools for use in the school lunch program, to institutions, and welfare agencies (table 2). Some of these foods were donated and some were left with the canneries as a toll for the use of their facilities.

The canneries reported that, in addition to what they had done, they could, by accepting carload, half-carload, or truckload lots, process at one time more than 20 million pounds of food purchased under the price support program (table 3).

The type of containers used in community canneries, as revealed by the survey, is of considerable interest. Tin containers are more practical than glass containers for use in community canneries equipped with large-sized retorts because the time required for handling glass containers for products canned under pressure is necessarily greater than for tin containers. The use of tin, consequently, permits the processing of greater quantities of food daily.

While tin containers have been recommended for canning products which must be canned under pressure, glass containers are more generally used than tin in some localities. In some instances this can be traced to preference, in others to expediency, many patrons having glass jars on hand. The most popular sizes of tin containers were shown by the survey to be No. 2 (pint) and No. 3 (quart). The same is true for glass containers, pints and quarts being the most popular. The No. 10 tin containers and gallon-sized glass containers are used chiefly for school lunch or institutional canning (table 4).

Other types of food preservation practiced in community canning centers, such as freezing, dehydrating, salting, brining, etc., represent an amount less than one-thirtieth of the quantity canned (table 1). Indications are, however, that community centers are looking more and more into the feasibility of adding freezing and cold-storage facilities to operate as a part of the cannery.

Table 1. - Food preservation in community canning centers, by regions, 1943

	North-east Region 1/	Southern Region	Midwest Region	Southwest Region	Western Region	U. S. total 1/
Total number of centers	364	1,242	292	917	135	2,950
Total number of families preserving	28,000	208,000	60,000	85,000	35,000	416,000
Number of centers canning	356	1,235	284	913	128	2,916
Number of families canning	28,000	204,000	50,000	84,000	36,000	402,000
Quantity of food canned (quarts)						
Fruits	532,000	1,443,000	317,000	1,074,000	318,000	3,684,000
Vegetables	606,000	12,627,800	1,873,000	5,366,000	1,389,000	21,861,000
Meats	25,000	2,273,000	170,000	893,000	203,000	3,564,000
Number of centers preserving: by other methods	31	194	46	178	26	475
Quantity preserved (pounds)						
Fruits	2,000	108,000	7,000	53,000	8,000	178,000
Vegetables	8,000	307,000	31,000	68,000	49,000	463,000
Meats	15,000	787,000	12,000	498,000	16,000	1,328,000

1/ Since schedules were not submitted for New York State, the totals shown do not include figures for this State.

Table 2.- Percentage distribution of canned food for home use and for distribution to schools, institutions, welfare agencies and others, by regions, 1943

Type of food and use	Northeast Region	Southern Region	Midwest Region	Southwest Region	Western Region	Total U. S.
Fruits						
Home use	74.8	86.1	87.8	90.7	66.2	84.3
Schools	22.2	11.1	9.5	8.8	32.1	13.6
Institutions	3.0	2.0	2.1	.2	1.2	1.6
Welfare ags.	-	.7	.1	.1	.3	.3
Others	-	.1	.5	.2	.2	.2
Vegetables						
Home use	93.6	87.3	88.1	91.4	72.2	87.6
Schools	5.5	10.6	7.8	7.1	24.5	10.3
Institutions	.5	1.7	3.3	.3	1.5	1.4
Welfare ags.	.2	.3	.5	.1	1.3	.3
Others	.2	.1	.3	1.1	.5	.4
Meats						
Home use	89.8	89.4	91.3	93.7	88.1	90.4
Schools	5.6	8.8	6.0	5.6	7.8	7.9
Institutions	4.6	1.5	2.4	.2	1.6	1.3
Welfare ags.	-	.3	.2	.2	2.1	.3
Others	-	-	.1	.3	.4	.1

Table 3.- Quantity of WFA commodities which could be accepted at any one time

Quantity acceptable per center	Number of centers	Total quantity acceptable by all centers
	Number	1,000 pounds
Carload lots	374	11,220
Half-carload lots	173	2,595
Truckload lots	1,263	6,315
Total	1,810	20,130

Table 4. - Type and size of containers used in community canning centers

Container sizes	Commodity canned		
	Fruit	Vegetable	Meat
	Number	Number	Number
<u>TIN</u>			
No. 2	1,768,643	14,000,084	1,543,594
No. 2½	391,226	1,303,202	230,641
No. 3	1,170,902	9,544,447	2,106,498
No. 5	--	745	--
No. 10	10,619	81,631	286
<u>GLASS</u>			
½ pint	65	--	11
Pint	434,033	1,360,223	168,210
Quart	841,735	2,759,859	378,624
2-quart	97,662	210,704	11,863
Gallon	656	2,359	118
2-gallon	--	1,214	--

The trend in the past few years has been for centers to purchase semi-commercial types of equipment such as No. 2- and No. 3-sized retorts with capacities of 33 and 106 quarts, respectively, instead of installing banks of home-sized pressure cookers. Of the centers reporting, approximately 65 percent are using the larger type of equipment and are canning roughly four-fifths of the total quantity of food canned.

Table 5. - Number of community canning centers and total quantity of food canned by type of equipment, 1943.

Type of equipment	Centers canning	Total quantity food preserved	Average quantity canned per center
	Number	Thousand quarts	Quarts
Retorts	1,900	23,739	12,500
Pressure cookers or other equipment	1,016	5,371	5,000
Total	2,916	29,110	

Types of Interested Agencies

Information obtained in this survey relative to assistance rendered by various interested agencies shows the State Board of Education taking the leadership in this field. As indicated below, some centers received assistance from more than one agency.

<u>Name of agency:</u>	<u>Number of centers</u>
Total number of centers reporting	2,950
Agricultural Extension Service, WFA	629
State Board of Education	2,286
State Department of Education	965
Farm Security Administration	147
Office of Distribution, WFA	298
Other agencies	916

Location of Community Canning Centers with Respect to School Buildings, Community Buildings, and Others

The extent to which school buildings are used to house community canning equipment is shown below. With additional equipment it is possible that still more use could be made of such buildings during vacation periods.

<u>Type of building:</u>	<u>Number of centers</u>
School buildings	1,976
Community buildings	302
Other buildings	502
Not indicated	170

Type of Service Charge by Centers

The average center either operates on a no charge or cash charge basis.

<u>Type of service charge:</u>	<u>Number of centers</u>
No charge	1,571
Cash <u>1/</u>	1,035
Toll <u>2/</u>	86
Cash and toll	20
Not indicated	238

1/ A charge of 2¢ to 8¢ per container was made to cover the cost of such items as space, utilities, maintenance, or supervision. In some instances the cost was for cans used.

2/ Toll was charged to provide food for school lunch programs, for welfare purposes or for Red Cross emergency needs.

